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Title slide: Introduction to the NCES Distance Learning Dataset Training System

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This module introduces users to the Distance Learning Dataset Training System of the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES. The training system – sometimes referred to as the DLDT – provides information about the Center’s datasets and the tools that users need in order to find published reports, explore and acquire data, create data files, and conduct analyses in selected statistical software packages.

This module provides users with a general orientation to the dataset training system and describes the functionality, navigation, and resources that are available within the system. It also describes the datasets that are currently used in the system and the plan to add additional datasets across time.

Additionally, this module explains *who* this system has been designed for, and *how* researchers can use it to efficiently meet their needs.

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NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education. Since its inception, NCES has been committed to documenting its statistical methods and making data accessible to its customers. NCES is also committed to providing high quality data about education to policymakers, researchers, *and* the general public. The DLDT continues this commitment by helping researchers obtain the information they need to conduct research using NCES data.

NCES fulfills a Congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report statistics on the condition of American education. NCES is also obligated to conduct and publish reports, and to review and report on education activities internationally. This task is carried out across the education enterprise ranging from early elementary through postsecondary and adult education.

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This training system has been designed to provide the maximum flexibility in answering any questions you may have about NCES and the datasets detailed within this training system, beginning with the most fundamental question of all... *“Are these data for me?”*

The DLDT allows you to access the information you need, at your own pace. It provides instruction in how to properly use NCES public-use and restricted-use datasets. The system also provides general information about NCES, its research methods, and specific information about several NCES surveys. Finally, the DLDT provides information about using specific NCES datasets, and analyzing the datasets appropriately.

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This training system is designed to allow you to access the modules in any order you wish to view them. However, it may be most effective when used in the order presented. Some of the information in later modules builds on information presented in the previous modules.

If you have experience analyzing complex sample survey data and you already have an idea of how the NCES data might contribute to your work, you may want to proceed directly into a set of survey-specific training modules.

If you are not sure that a particular NCES survey can meet your needs, or if you need to determine which survey-specific modules are going to be most helpful to you, we recommend that you first investigate the common modules, which introduce the NCES datasets and provide general guidance for where to begin. Researchers who are proficient with basic data analysis are likely to benefit most from the full DLDT, as it will build on their base knowledge to help them access and use the data files that NCES produces. The NCES DLDT is structured to help you acquire a needed dataset in order to explore research questions and test hypotheses. It is important to note that this training system has *not* been designed to teach basic statistics or how to use statistical software packages to analyze data.

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Once you launch a module from the DLDT landing page, it will open in a new window.

Use the module control buttons on the bottom of the screen to move around and access different features within each module.

Click on the “Help” button to access a presentation that describes how to use the navigational features of the Distance Learning Dataset Training system.

As a module is playing, links may appear on the slide. Links to other pages are denoted by blue underlined screen text. If you want to view the page, click on the link text to open the URL. The website will open in a new browser window. To return back to the module, close the linked page, or just click on the DLDT module page that remains open in the background.

Each module contains links to the module transcript, the presentation slides, and the DLDT glossary for your viewing and use.

When you close out of a DLDT module web page to exit a module, you will return to the DLDT landing page, which remains open in another underlying window.

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There are two types of NCES DLDT modules that are available: Common modules and survey-specific modules.

The common modules help you understand NCES data across the education spectrum. They also discuss the methods NCES uses to ensure that the data collected, and the published data products and reports, are consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate. Lastly, the common modules help you understand how to access public- and restricted-use datasets.

The survey-specific modules provided in this training system present more detailed information about the specific studies conducted by NCES.

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The development of the DLDT is a multi-year effort at NCES which will provide computer-based training modules that allow interested potential users to learn about the individual survey systems' designs and utility. It will also inform users on how to access the datasets and how to apply appropriate statistical data analysis techniques to NCES datasets in order to answer research and policy questions. The DLDT will provide resource efficiency and make training available to a large audience of potential users.

The DLDT contains common modules as well as survey-specific modules. Please note that more datasets will be added in future years.

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The NCES DLDT is structured to help you acquire a needed dataset in order to explore research questions and test hypotheses. Researchers who are proficient with data analysis can benefit most quickly from the DLDT as it will build on that base knowledge to help you access and use the public- or restricted-use data files that NCES produces.

If you have experience working with data using an appropriate statistical package and you have used NCES products and publications to better understand specific NCES datasets, then the DLDT is for you.

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This module has provided you with an overview of the purpose of the DLDT system, its features, content, and target audience.

Each module within the training system closes with a Summary and Resources slide, like this one, for quick reference during your exploration of the modules and the NCES datasets featured within the system. You can click the Resources button at the bottom of the module to download a full transcript of the module and/or the module slides.

You may now proceed to the next module in the series, or click the exit button to return to the landing page.